

Email Marketers Say Recession Continues, and It Hurts

Survey finds 88 percent of email marketing budgets to increase or stay the same in 2010

ATLANTA, Dec. 17, 2009—A New survey of 300 email marketers found that nearly nine out of 10 (88 percent) said the recession continues, and three-quarters said it's hurt their business.

The survey conducted late November 2009 asked the 300 email marketers asked when they thought the recession might end, 36 percent of email marketers said "not anytime soon." One out of five thought the economy wouldn't improve before the fourth quarter of 2010.

The survey results indicate that while recession concerns linger, marketers remain positive about email's ability to cost-effectively increase customer loyalty and drive revenue. In fact, four out of 10 marketers reported that their email budgets in 2010 would increase, and nearly half (47 percent) said their budgets would stay the same.

In the coming year, more than half of survey respondents (52 percent) said increasing customer loyalty was a top email marketing goal. Overall, 51 percent of respondents want to drive incremental revenue with their email program; 65 percent of those with larger email budgets say that's their top goal in 2010.

"When consumers' purse strings tighten, savvy marketers remain respectful but attentive, so their brands are top of mind when their customers are once again ready to buy," said Bill Nussey, CEO of Silverpop. "Today's marketers are mindful of the important role relationship building plays in a successful marketing strategy, and they understand the unique ability of email to engage customers."

Increasing utilization of the tools and tactics that build customer engagement are evident. Behavioral targeting - or sending messages based on recipients' past open, click or Web site actions - was a tactic that worked well for 28 percent of survey respondents this past year, and incorporating promotional offers in [transactional emails](#) proved successful for an equal number of marketers.

While marketers remain positive about the role email will play in meeting their goals in 2010, they are also prepared to face related challenges. Thirty-seven percent of respondents said the biggest challenge in the coming year will be "inbox clutter." Not surprising, given that Forrester Research estimates consumers will receive more than 9,000 email marketing messages a year by 2014.

Twenty percent of email marketers said they will struggle with "providing timely and relevant content." MarketingSherpa has reported that lack of relevance is the No. 1 reason people unsubscribe to email programs. To ensure messages are anticipated and welcomed, 27 percent of marketers surveyed plan to incorporate behavioral targeting into [email campaigns](#) for the first time in 2010, and 26 percent will begin to use surveys to gather useful customer data.

Overall, more than eight out of 10 (84 percent) plan to include social media into their email programs in the coming year, and 38 percent will add SMS. Marketers enjoying budget increases are even more likely to add these to their programs; 89 percent will incorporate social media and 44 percent SMS.

"Linking email to popular social networks can be a very successful strategy," Nussey said. "If the messages are timely and relevant, recipients will share them with their networks, and the opportunity for additional exposure increases exponentially. And as customers become more mobile, their marketing must reach them in more timely ways and through channels such as SMS."

"Email marketers willing to take the time and effort to create one-to-one messaging that's timely, relevant and targeted will be able to soften the sting of a tight economy," Nussey added.

